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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003628

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MINDEF AL-DULIME

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador, accompanied by A/DCM, met with Iraqi MinDef Dulime on September 3. They discussed low Sunni representation in the Iraqi Army, including pressure to fire one of two Sunni division commanders. Also discussed were efforts to enhance western security, with the idea of using local tribes under MOD authority to augment security operations. Dulime raised his long term goal of standardizing Iraqi Army equipment -- ideally with U.S. gear -- although for now he has to settle for cheaper Russian-type weapons. He also recommended drawing in certain Iraqi Islamic Party members to build Sunni support for the draft constitution. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In a cordial meeting at his residence on September 3, the Ambassador, accompanied by A/DCM, met with Iraqi MinDef Sadoun al-Dulime. Discussion began with Dulime dispelling a rumor that he was to be replaced as MinDef, with him confirming that his position was secure.

SHIA-DOMINATED MOD

¶3. (C) Discussion then turned to lack of Sunni representation in the MOD. Dulime, a Sunni, confirmed the high proportion - 70 percent, he said - of Shia personnel in the Ministry, including that four of ten division commanders are Shia (three are Kurd, one is a Turcoman). He also confirmed that he was under pressure from the PM to fire MG Mahmoud al-Shamiri, Baghdad Division Commander and one of the two Sunni division commanders. Shamiri was being fired because he had relieved a Shia brigade commander and two Shia battalion commanders, who were Islamists. These three were replaced with Shia, but not Islamists. A SCIRI National Assembly member, Jalal Al-Saghiri, had called repeatedly for Shamiri's dismissal.

¶4. (C) Dulime lamented this action, stating that Shamiri is a good officer and one of the few Sunnis in senior command. He added that many Sunnis are eager to join the Iraq Army, but lack of outreach as well as Shia discrimination prevent many Sunnis from joining. Dulime and the Ambassador concurred that better recruitment efforts must be made with the goal of developing a professional army representative of all of Iraq's groups -- without MOD and MOI being politicized.

TRIBES - HOW TO USE THEM

¶5. (C) Dulime discussed the security situation in western Anbar province, again raising the idea of bringing local tribes under MOD authority. He said he could muster up to 5000 individuals, but that one battalion and two companies (approx. 1200 men) would suffice for now. The Iraqi Army could supply field grade officers to command these units, he noted. He particularly referred to the Kata'ib al Hamza (KH), composed of members of several different western tribes. The KH had fought against coalition forces in the past, but avowed to him that they had made a mistake and that Zarqawi was their real enemy. The Americans will one day leave, they argued to Dulime; Zarqawi not only will remain, but he will try to transform the tribes into religious zealots. Dulime also repeated his confidence in the loyalty of the Al Bu Mahal tribe, who are also desperate for support in their efforts to combat Zarqawi units and other takfiris in the west. Finally, Dulime stated that extremist Mohammad Mahmud Abd al Latif recently told him that he and his supporters also opposed the takfiris and Zarqawi affiliates. While not formally loyalists, Abd al Latif had contributed to opening registration centers in Ramadi and encouraged popular participation in the national elections. Abd al Latif merits attention in the fight against Zarqawi, Dulime concluded.

¶6. (C) Dulime stated that drawing in local armed tribes to support government and Coalition security efforts would effectively complement existing security. Their inclusion directly under the security force apparatus at MOD would diffuse any threat they might pose, while increasing security against insurgents. He contrasted this effort with authorizing armed militias, which he believed should remain banned.

STANDARDIZATION OF EQUIPMENT

17. (C) Dulime said the Iraqi Army eventually should have a standardized inventory of equipment -- preferably American. He admitted that American weapons, vehicles, communications equipment, etc., were very expensive, and he was glad MNSTC-I was currently providing a lot of it. He regretted, however, that for Iraq's own purchases, Baghdad had to depend on cheaper equipment, especially from Eastern Europe. He agreed that standardized inventories saved money and effort in the long-run because of the simplicity of acquiring spare parts, maintenance, tool kits, and training.

CONSTITUTION - GETTING SUNNI SUPPORT

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18. (C) Ambassador said some Sunni Arabs are raising new ideas to garner more Sunni support for the draft Constitution, especially regarding Iraq's Arab identity. He mentioned in particular the notion of alluding to Iraq's founding and active role in the Arab League, and its commitment to the AL charter. Dulime was not sure this would be sufficient, but he indicated the Constitution was a good document, and worth our efforts. He suggested working with Iraqi Islamic Party leader Mohsen abd al Hamid, and the party's spiritual advisor, Husama Tikriti.

Khalilzad